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**NFB Pledge**

I pledge to participate actively in the efforts of the National Federation of the Blind to achieve equality, opportunity and security for the blind; to support the policies and programs of the Federation; and to abide by its Constitution.

**Meeting Announcements**

Our next meeting will be on Saturday, May 12, from 9:30 a.m.-noon. We meet at The Fountains of Melbourne, 4451 Stack Blvd., Melbourne, FL, 32901.

We have begun our transportation policy this month. If you are able to obtain alternative transportation to our meetings, we strongly encourage you to do so. Space Coast Area Transit will get you home, but in the interests of getting everyone to the meetings on time, please try to make alternate arrangements.

Anyone needing transportation, please contact Maria Rigogliosi, (321) 795-7376, no later than Monday, May 7. If Maria calls you to ask if you need a ride, please call her back in a timely fashion. This will make the process smoother. If you are not able to take your scheduled trip on SCAT, please contact Maria to cancel; please do not cancel the morning of the trip. We all need to be conscientious of the other passengers who are on the bus for hours; if you can not make the trip, please cancel no later than Friday afternoon. As stated at our chapter meeting last month, we will track all cancellations.

As a reminder, SCAT charges a fare of $1.50 each way, for a total of $3.00. Drivers are unable to make change. Fare cards may be purchased by contacting SCAT, (321) 635-7815, option 403 or 604. Fare cards cost $15.00, which provides 10 trips. Please request a paratransit bus pass as it is the only one usable on a paratransit trip.

Our May meeting will be packed with information. We are going to have a discussion about transportation, what your rights and responsibilities are and what SCAT must provide to you as the passenger. We have many new members, some who have never taken a paratransit trip and others who do not know how the system works. If you have questions about paratransit, this will be the time to ask.

We will also have a 50/50 raffle. In addition to a blue tooth speaker as an additional prize, we have a donated gift card from the restaurant Southern Sisters, on Sarno Road. The value of the gift card is $25. Each raffle ticket costs $1 and the drawing will be at the end of the meeting. Come, bring your dollar bills and win!

**Amazing Trio Bundle**

The National Federation of the Blind of Florida will have a fundraising raffle at National Convention in July. Members were given a set of five raffle tickets to sell, for $5 each. Please remember to return your ticket stubs, monies collected and any unsold tickets to Camille Tate at chapter meetings. All must be turned in by our June 9 meeting. If you did not receive tickets to sell, but would like to purchase any unsold tickets, please see Camille at our May meeting.

Tickets cost $5 each and these are the prizes: First Place: an iPad Pro or cash value (worth $800); Second Place: an Uber or Lyft travel voucher or cash value (worth $500); or, Third Place: a travel voucher or cash value (worth $200). You do not have to be present to win. The drawing will take place on July 8. Please remember that the ticket purchaser must put their name and phone number on the stub that is turned in.

**National Convention**

The National Federation of the Blind will hold its annual convention for the final time in Florida this year. The convention is from July 3-8, in Orlando. The convention is at the Rosen Shingle Creek Resort, 9939 Universal Blvd., Orlando, FL, 33829. Rooms may not be available if you do not reserve them soon. To reserve a room, call the Reservations Desk at (866) 996-6638. Room rates are as follows: singles and doubles, $88 per night; and triples and quads, $93 per night. There is a 12.5% hotel tax and a $100 room deposit. Cancellations before June 1 will receive a 50% refund of deposit, but cancellations after June 1 will not receive a refund.

The Melbourne Space Coast Chapter will pay the registration fee for members who wish to attend National Convention. At this time, the board has not determined if we will pay for banquet fees. Registration is $25 and banquet is $65. Anyone attending the convention who has signed up with Camille, will be notified following the chapter board meeting on May 7 if we will pay banquet fees. If you decide to attend the convention but do not meet the pre-registration deadline of May 31, each of the fees increase by $5. If MSCC pays your registration and/or banquet fees, you are required to attend at least one day of the convention. If you do not and we have paid any fees on your behalf, you will be required to reimburse the chapter. Please see Camille Tate at our May meeting if you are interested, or call (321) 372-4899.

**4th Annual Car and Bike Show**

The Melbourne Space Coast Chapter is pleased to announce our 4th Annual Car and Bike Show. We proudly hold this event each year in celebration of White Cane Day, observed as October 15, through an Act of Congress in 1964. Our show will be on Saturday, October 13, at The Fountains of Melbourne, from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. We hope to have an even bigger event this year than last! We sincerely hope that our members will join us with their white canes to support our chapter. This is our biggest fundraiser of the year and each and every one of you will help make it the best. Please check your newsletters in the coming months for more updates regarding our car and bike show.

**Chapter Members Input**

The Melbourne Space Coast Chapter wants to hear from you. We try to meet the needs of each and every member when planning our chapter meetings. We have gained so many new members we feel it necessary to ask all of you what you want at meetings. We have tried (and sometimes succeeded) in shortening our meetings so we all can sit and talk to each other. While we are unable to not have any business, we understand the importance of the social touch. We have eliminated the constant stream of guest speakers as well. This administration feels strongly that all members should have a voice in how their chapter meetings are conducted. We want and need to hear from you.

We have some ideas about how to add more fun into chapter meetings, but member input is essential. While we can not please everyone, let us find a happy medium. Some of the ideas that have been suggested is a chapter outing, not during the time of a chapter meeting, but a fun activity, like bowling or a movie night. We could plan a picnic in a nice park. We could even plan a shopping trip to the mall. The possibilities are endless. How about a game of tic tac toe or playing a card game? All of these things are achievable. Just let us know.

You may contact President Camille Tate directly at (321) 372-4899 or ctate2076@att.net. You may speak to any board member at a chapter meeting.

**The Guest Speaker Question**

It has come to the attention of the Melbourne Space Coast Chapter that some members would like to see more guest speakers. We have cut back on guest speakers lately because some members thought there were too many. So, what would you like? Let us know. In fact, the chapter’s board will be discussing upcoming meeting agendas on May 7.

One potential guest speaker will be Emergency Management. They spoke with us in 2016 and gave great information on hurricane preparedness. They also explained the Special Needs Evacuation process and shelters. Unfortunately, we will not be able to schedule them for May, but hopefully we can have them in June, only 8 days after hurricane season starts.

A second idea is to have the Supervisor of Elections Office bring their accessible voting machine to a chapter meeting again. We also had this in 2016. There are mid-term elections in November. We may be able to have them in August.

Another possibility is to have Corporal Donovan from the Sheriff’s Office come and speak again. He was a wonderful guest speaker who gave us basic safety tips.

Please share your thoughts about these speakers and any others with any member of your board or President. We value your input.

 **Local Coordinating Board in Brevard County**

The Melbourne Space Coast Chapter has focused on transportation in Brevard County since we began in 2015. We have gone to County Commissioner meetings and met with them individually. We attended the Charter Review Commission in 2016, although we came into it close to the very end. Members of your board have attended Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) meetings to learn what plans are in the works and how it will affect the blind in Brevard County. We have requested participation by our membership, either by going to these meetings with us, writing a letter or making a phone call to your district’s Commissioner. Now, we have an opportunity for more involvement in gaining our transportation needs.

There are two types of paratransit in Florida. Transportation Disadvantaged is what many disabled riders use and until recently, the only paratransit we were aware of. Each area in Florida has a Local Coordinating Board for the Transportation Disadvantaged. They meet publicly to discuss funding, routes, ridership and other items of interest. The LCB meets each quarter and the meetings are held at the Viera Government Center. The next meeting is Monday, May 14, at 10:15 a.m., in the Space Coast Room.

As a note of interest, Camille Tate, President of the Melbourne Space Coast Chapter, was appointed as a disabled representative on the LCB last year. She has a term of three years. The LCB consists of members of the business community, governmental agencies, SCAT and citizen advocates. We hope that members of the chapter will take part in this and future meetings. The LCB meeting following May 14, will be August 6, at the same time and place. If you have questions, please see Camille Tate at our chapter meetings.

**The National Federation of the Blind knows that blindness is not the characteristic that defines you or your future. Every day we raise the expectations of blind people, because low expectations create obstacles between blind people and our dreams. You can live the life you want; blindness is not what holds you back.**